

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0512

August 11, 2021

Dear Sir/Ma'am,

We write to implore you as a member school of the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) to urge the NCAA to prevent sex discrimination in its programs and activities and to meaningfully address and incorporate the findings and recommendations of the External Gender Equity Review conducted by Kaplan, Hecker, Fink LLP.

The Kaplan review affirmed what we knew: “the NCAA has not lived up to its stated commitment to ‘diversity, inclusion and gender equity among its student-athletes, coaches and administrators.’” The report acknowledged that the NCAA has previously engaged in both internal and external gender equity review efforts, noting that “all too often, the proposed reforms that came out of these efforts ended up doing no more than sitting on a shelf.” We must no longer allow the NCAA to pay mere lip service to progress.

The review of the basketball championships was prompted by University of Oregon basketball player Sedona Prince’s viral video exposing unequal weight room conditions at the 2021 Division I Basketball Championships. It found that the NCAA provided inequitable benefits and services to women’s basketball teams, including inferior publicity and promotions, equipment and supplies, food, facilities, travel accommodations, and health care protocols and resources. In fact, the report notes that “in both practice and perception, women’s basketball essentially reports to and is subordinate to men’s basketball,” and “the resources allocated to men’s and women’s basketball differ significantly, even taking into account the differences in the size of the tournaments.” Or as Stanford Women’s Basketball Coach Tara Vanderveer so eloquently summarized at a recent event, “This spring, the men had lobster bisque and ribeye. [Women] had a Salisbury steak and had to order out from DoorDash.”

The Kaplan review not only highlighted these disparities but also the culture and structures that promote discrimination, noting that “the NCAA’s broadcast agreements, corporate sponsorship contracts, distribution of revenue, organizational structure, and culture all prioritize Division I men’s basketball over everything else in ways that create, normalize, and perpetuate gender inequities.” Notably, the review also found that the disparities are bad for business, with the NCAA leaving money on the table that could be generated by women’s basketball if given the opportunity.

These disparities also are contrary to the letter and spirit of Title IX and undermine efforts to promote gender equality. As a recipient of federal funding, your academic institution is responsible for ensuring equity in athletic opportunities for students regardless of sex. That responsibility does not cease just because certain aspects of your athletics program are controlled by an athletic association, and in fact, recipients are prohibited from aiding or perpetuating discrimination against any person by providing significant assistance to any organization that discriminates on the basis of sex. Moreover, urging the NCAA to remedy its gender inequities is the right thing to do and will demonstrate to your academic community that you are committed to women’s equal participation and advancement in sports and society writ large.

As such, we urge you to request that the NCAA leadership and Board of Governors take concrete and meaningful action to address sex discrimination in NCAA programs and activities, starting with concrete steps to address and accept the findings and recommendations made in the External Gender Equity Review.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress



Lois Frankel
Member of Congress



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



Carolyn B. Maloney
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